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SUBJECT: July 4 Reception Advances Support for Coalition Government

Summary

¶1. (U) Embassy Nairobi's tremendously successful July 4 reception was highlighted by the joint appearance of Prime Minister Odinga and Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka. More than 2,000 guests witnessed the political rivals joining the Ambassador on the podium for speeches, all of which focused on support for the coalition government. The presence of a large CODEL emphasized the strength of the U.S.-Kenya relationship. End summary.

Kenyan Unity at July 4 Reception

¶2. (U) The July 4 reception, hosted by the Ambassador at his residence, was attended by over 2,000 guests from Parliament, the executive branch, civil society, religious groups, the private sector, the media, and Kenya's cultural community, among others. The event was made possible through funding donated by the American Chamber of Commerce.

¶3. (U) Both Prime Minister Odinga and Vice President Musyoka attended and put on a display of unity by joining the Ambassador on the podium during his speech. The Ambassador's remarks emphasized support for the coalition government tied to the achievement of results on institutional reform (see text of Ambassador's remarks in para 5). The joint high-profile presence of Odinga and Musyoka, who are bitter rivals, was unprecedented since the formation of the coalition government (they have generally been together only in the presence of the President). Still unresolved is the protocol order of the coalition government, but the two skirted the issue gracefully, with Musyoka acquiescing in Odinga's determination to make remarks on behalf of the government. Indicating that he was also speaking on behalf of President Kibaki, Odinga lauded the decisive role played by the U.S. in helping resolve the Kenyan crisis, spoke in glowing terms of his visit to the U.S., and emphasized the commitment he and President Kibaki share to make the coalition work. The speaker of Parliament jointed Musyoka and Odinga on the podium. Congressman David Price, who was heading a 6-member congressional delegation, also made remarks emphasizing U.S. support for the coalition government and the necessity for the government to deliver results for all the people of Kenya. Other notable guests included Mama Obama, Senator Obama's grandmother, and Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai.

¶4. (U) The event was extensively and very positively covered on all the television stations, on radio, and in the print media. A number of commentators noted that only the U.S. could have brought the two leaders and such a diverse cross-section of Kenya together. Many guests attending the reception expressed warm gratitude for the role that the U.S. played to "save Kenya," and welcomed our continuing engagement to keep the process on track.

¶5. (U) Begin text of Ambassador's remarks.

Leaders of the Coalition Government, Honorable Ministers,
Colleagues, Guests, and Friends:

I want to extend a very warm welcome to all of you who have joined us to celebrate the 232nd anniversary of the independence of the United States of America. I also want to note that we are particularly honored to have with us a distinguished U.S. Congressional Delegation headed by Representative David Price of North Carolina. Here in Kenya, we are making this event a celebration of the vibrant, strong, and expanding partnership between our two countries. This is fitting because that partnership is based on the democratic values and friendship we share.

Those universal democratic values were immortally articulated by one of our founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson, in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

During the past 231 years Americans have consolidated institutions intended to ensure democratic government of, by, and for the people.

In light of the profound crisis that gripped Kenya earlier this year, it is particularly relevant to recall that the progress the people of the United States have made over these many years has often been difficult, sometimes painfully slow, and occasionally bloody. Examining this history tells us with certainty that the process of building democracy is never easy and is never complete.

To the extent we have been successful, we have benefited from the extraordinary achievement of our founding fathers, for they put in place a constitutional framework based on the principle of checks and balances. That system was based on a hard-headed assessment that, in order to protect the interests of all citizens, the power of any one institution, individual, or group must be limited. Indeed, the challenge to balance respect for the will of the majority with the necessity to protect the rights of minorities is a constant struggle in all democracies.

As we reflect upon this independence anniversary and the partnership we share, I am reminded of the Kenyan proverb: "Nia zikiwa moja kilicho mbali huja (no matter their differences, people working toward similar goals can achieve them). The Kenyan people deserve enormous credit for coming together to overcome the crisis that threatened to tear apart the fabric of their nation. They did this ultimately by drawing on their shared values and their shared goals to strengthen the country's democracy, society, and economy. The coalition government is rightly based on shared interests.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Kenyan people for never having deviated from the democratic path, and for, in effect, constituting a new model for the democracies of the developing world. On behalf of the United States, I also want to commend President Kibaki and Prime Minister Odinga for demonstrating patriotic leadership by making difficult compromises for the good of all Kenyans. The recent official visit of the Prime Minister to Washington highlighted my country's support for the coalition government and our determination to help it deliver tangible results for the Kenyan people.

We recognize the commitment of the coalition government to deliver on its promise to carry out fundamental institutional reform in order to address the underlying grievances revealed by the crisis. We join the Kenyan people in looking forward to timely results with respect to constitutional reform, electoral reform, and land reform.

We join the Kenyan people in wanting to see credible results from the various commissions formed as a result of the national political accord. Indeed, the future of our bilateral relationship is inextricably tied to the progress of democracy in Kenya.

Among the many things that we share, the United States and Kenya are both communities which encompass great diversity of cultures, ethnic and racial groups, and religions. The history of our two countries - ours going back centuries, Kenya's only decades - shows that diversity enriches and strengthens our nations if we learn to value it. Though we Americans have had far more time to build our democracy than Kenya has, we can truly say that neither democratic system is perfect. In the U.S. - as in Kenya -- we struggle to

fight corruption, to promote communal harmony, to foster security, and to bring about gender equity. Acutely aware of our own imperfections and limitations, we support the efforts of the Kenyan people to address these difficult challenges. But we need to follow the Swahili saying that "kila mlango na ufunguo wake" (every door has its own key) because it is up to Kenyans to solve their problems in their own ways. At the same time, we must be quick to remember that "kinyozi hajinyoi" (a barber does not shave himself). As a reliable friend, we will continue to assist your efforts and to support the positive momentum underway.

As a symbol of the rich partnership between the United States and Kenya, I invite you to witness, immediately following these remarks, the dedication of the new rose garden that is "dedicated to peace and to the U.S.-Kenyan partnership."

Americans and Kenyans share a belief in the power of the collective spirit, profoundly illustrated by both countries' journeys to independence. I am struck by three Swahili sayings that seem to capture, long before America was founded, a sense of our mutual faith in the will of the people. One says: Penye wengi pana Mungu (Where there are many people, there God is); our pledge of allegiance speaks of "one nation under God." Another reads: "Umoja ni nguvu" (unity is strength); the inscription on our currency is "one from many." Yet another reads: Panapo wengi hapaharibiki neno (where there are many, nothing goes wrong). Ladies and gentlemen, we are many gathered here, and we trust that this gathering and our future efforts together will be blessed.

Please join me in raising our glasses in a toast to the 232nd anniversary of the independence of the United States of America, to Kenya's democratic progress, and to the partnership between the United States and Kenya.

Ahsanteni sana na Mungu awabariki.

End text.

RANNEBERGER